

Release: July 26, 2002
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Rapid Response Team Activated to Aid J.C. Penney Employees

ST. LOUIS -- The state's Rapid Response Team has been activated to help workers who will lose their jobs at the J.C. Penney store at Northwest Plaza in St. Louis. About 144 employees will be laid off between August 24 and September 7 due to the store's closing.

The layoffs at J.C. Penney are attributed to a reorganization within the company. More than 40 percent of the workers will be offered jobs at other J.C. Penney stores.

The Rapid Response team, composed of representatives from the Department of Economic Development's Division of Workforce Development (DWD), the St. Louis County Department of Human Resource Services and the St. Louis Community College Employment and Training Center responds to the needs of workers who have lost their jobs by providing special training and re-employment services.

Joseph L. Driskill, director of the Department of Economic Development, has directed DWD to assist J.C. Penney employees by offering Missouri Career Center services.

"Our staff is committed to doing everything they can to help these workers find new jobs," Driskill said. "The staff members at the Missouri Career Centers are very qualified and have excellent resources right at their fingertips. J.C. Penney workers who are being displaced will be able to take advantage of free services such as preparing resumes, career counseling, and in some cases, training toward a new skill."

Other services provided by the Rapid Response Team and the local Missouri Career Center include interviewing skills, job search methods, on-the-job training and tuition assistance for vocational training or education.

Representatives from DWD, the St. Louis County Department of Human Resource Services and the St. Louis Community College Employment and Training Center are working with J.C. Penney to ensure that workers have access to these free services. Meetings will be held with workers at 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. on July 30 to explain how these services can help them find a new job.

Employers interested in hiring J.C. Penney workers can call 1-800-877-8698.

Since 1983--when Missouri's dislocated worker program was established--more than 100,000 dislocated workers have participated in the program. Approximately 80 percent of the people assisted by the program find new employment.

Laid-off workers interested in the training or re-employment services offered through the Rapid Response team should call DWD at 1-800-877-8698 or the St. Louis County Department of Human Resources at 314-622-9032.